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PETITIONS RESPECTING THE MEXICAN WAR.

THIS war came upon us so suddenly, that there was no opportunity of protesting against it in advance ; and, as Congress adjourned soon after, and the President was left with his advisers to determine what measures, if any, should be taken to arrest its progress, we addressed to him the two following petitions. It may seem late in the day to publish them now ; but we think the official organ of our Society ought to preserve a record of such proceedings. The London Society's periodical republished them, with expressions of "great pleasure," several months ago.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY JAMES K. POLK, PRESIDENT OF THE U. STATES.

SIR,—Permit us, as citizens of the Republic over which you preside, and as friends of peace and good will among men, respectfully to address you concerning the war now waging under your direction against the Republic of Mexico.

We will not here retrace this war to its origin ; but, even if our government was from first to last right in annexing the Republic of Texas to our own, we still object to the continuance of the present war, and earnestly entreat you to take measures for *its immediate termination by recalling our troops from Mexico, and then offering to adjust with her all matters now in dispute, either by renewed negotiation, or by reference to umpires mutually chosen.*

1. Because such a course alone can open the way for Mexico honorably to renew negotiations for an amicable adjustment of the difficulties between us.

2. Because the continuance of our troops upon Mexican soil can serve only to keep us in the wrong, to goad Mexico into a more desperate resistance, and thus aggravate the evils of the conflict, as well as postpone the final adjustment.

3. Because we deprecate the growing evils of this war. You called for 50,000 troops. Congress voted \$10,000,000 to begin the war ; it has been said by some of our ablest statesmen to cost for a time about half a million a day ; nor can it continue much longer without wasting many millions more. Meanwhile, it is deranging business, demoralizing the community, and threatening to flood no small part of our land with its malign influences.

4. Because it depends entirely on ourselves whether this war shall continue or cease. Withdraw our troops ; and there will be the end of it.

5. Because in no other way can the difficulties ever be adjusted. It is idle to talk of settling them by the sword ; for war, as Vattel says, never settles any thing, but merely leaves the points in dispute just where it found them, and can at best only force one of the parties into an unwilling adjustment by negotiation. A fair and generous proposal to Mexico, preceded by the withdrawal of our troops, would do more than a score of battles, if each were a victory, to hasten a satisfactory settlement.

6. Because we should hazard nothing by a course so magnanimous. We can well afford it. We have nearly three times the population of Mexico, and more than ten times her resources ; and, with all this superiority over her, it would be the extreme of meanness to harass and exhaust a Sister Republic already distracted and impoverished by intestine broils.

7. Because we can obtain by negotiation or reference all our just rights ; and, should we by the sword wrest more than these, it would prove only a curse.

8. Because, if we want from Mexico more than we have a right to claim, we can get it by fair purchase far cheaper, as well as more honorably, than by war.

9. Because we dread the reflex influence of this war upon ourselves, if continued much longer. Already is it contradicting our settled policy of peace and justice. Our troops, first an army of observation, and next an army of occupation, have now become confessedly an army of invasion. The experiment is full of danger. We see what a whirlwind of war-excitement swept at a blast over the Great Valley of the West; and, when once the old Roman passion for conquest and extended dominion is fully kindled among us, it may spread like a hurricane of fire on a western prairie, and burn on until it has burnt over the last acre on this continent. Let such a spirit get full possession of our people; and our doom, as a free and prosperous republic, is sealed beyond all ordinary means of redemption.

We know not, Sir, why this war should be continued any longer; and we, therefore, request that an immediate stop be put to it by withdrawing our troops from Mexico, and offering to adjust all the difficulties between us by negotiation or reference.

On behalf of the American Peace Society,

GEO. C. BECKWITH, *Cor. Secretary.*

Boston, July 20, 1846.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY JAMES K. POLK, PRESIDENT OF THE U. STATES.

SIR,—Recent discussions in the Parliament of Great Britain disclose the fact, that her Government has tendered to our own the offer of her mediation in adjusting our present difficulties with Mexico; and, as citizens of this Republic, and friends of the whole human race, we beg leave very respectfully yet most earnestly to request, that you will on our part accept this generous proposal, and meanwhile suspend all hostile operations against Mexico to give a fair trial to this overture for terminating the disputes between us without any further effusion of blood.

We think, Sir, that all good men will cordially unite with us in this request. Our Government has from the first declared, that the only object of this war is to secure a speedy, equitable peace; and every one must see, that the method here proposed is far more likely than the blind and brutal arbitrament of the sword, to insure even-handed justice, and give permanent satisfaction to both parties. Even the law of nations requires, that war shall never be resorted to until all other means of securing justice have been honestly tried in vain, and shall cease whenever that object can be acquired by peaceful methods. Such a method, confessedly better for this purpose than any exchange of shots and stabs on the field of battle, is now offered to us; nor do we see how it will be possible to justify ourselves before the bar of God or the world, if we decline this fair and honorable offer, and still persist in a war of invasion and vengeance against a sister Republic whose misfortunes claim rather our forbearance, sympathy and kind offices.

It seems to us, Sir, that the general interests of humanity demand our acceptance of this offer from Great Britain. We have, in the present imperfect state even of the civilized world, no means of averting or arresting war, except negotiation, reference or mediation; and, if we spurn or neglect these, we do all that our example can to sweep away the last checks upon the most terrible scourge that the Almighty in his wrath ever lets loose upon a sinful race. We feel solicitous, also, for the honor of republicanism, hitherto regarded as an ally of peace, but likely, if it refuse such amicable substitutes for war, to incur the scorn and abhorrence of the world, as a foe to its highest welfare.

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives
of the United States of America :*

YOUR Petitioners, on behalf of the American Peace Society, which embraces persons of every sect and party throughout the land interested in the promotion of universal and permanent peace, very respectfully but most earnestly entreat your Honorable Bodies to *take without delay such measures, within the pale of your constitutional powers, as you may judge best fitted to TERMINATE THE PRESENT MEXICAN WAR without any further waste of blood and treasure.*

We urge this request from no party or personal motives, but from a strong, imperative sense of duty as Christians, and as friends alike of our country and our species. We believe with Cicero, that 'the worst peace is preferable to the best war'; with Lord Brougham, that 'war is unchristian, and the greatest of human crimes'; with Franklin, that 'all wars are follies, and that it would be better for nations to settle their difficulties even by the cast of a die, than by fighting and destroying each other'; with Jefferson, "that war is an instrument entirely inefficient towards redressing wrong, and multiplies instead of indemnifying losses;" with the Apostle, that 'wars and fightings come from the lusts of men'; and with Jesus Christ, that 'we ought to love our enemies, and do unto others as we would that they should do unto us.'

With such views, we cannot look with complacency, or in silence, on the malice and outrage, the vices, crimes and miseries inseparable from any war; and we feel constrained to remonstrate especially against the present war as repugnant to the spirit and precepts of our holy religion;—as at variance with the professed policy of our government from its origin;—as highly unjust and cruel to Mexico;—as unnecessary, and suicidal to ourselves;—as fraught with no real good to either party, but pregnant with immense evils to both, and likely to bring disgrace upon our country, and the cause of popular freedom.

It seems to us, moreover, that our government, if in earnest for such a result, might easily bring this war to a close very soon. Were our forces recalled from Mexico, the contest would of necessity cease, and the way be opened for a peaceful, equitable adjustment of all difficulties between us. It is obviously for our government to take the lead in measures of conciliation and peace; because, being by far the strongest party, we could make such advances without the imputation of weakness or fear, and because the war, as now carried on by us, is confessedly a war of invasion, conquest and vengeance.

Nor do we see any need, or use, or justifiable object of continuing the war any longer. If its motive be rapacity or ambition, a love of plunder, or a thirst for military glory, the wreaking of vengeance upon feeble, distracted Mexico, or the dismemberment of that Republic to enlarge our own, we must, as Christians, and as friends of our country and the world, protest most earnestly against the further prosecution of this war for such objects. If its sole aim is a fair and honorable adjustment of existing difficulties, this can be secured without another drop of blood; and every day of conflict is only rendering Mexico less able and less inclined to pay what she owes us, more and more desperate in defence of her soil, and less willing, for a just compensation, to part even with the well nigh useless outskirts of her vast territory. Were the sword sheathed at once, we might, by amicable negotiation, obtain all the territory we can reasonably desire, for a mere fraction of what this war has already cost ourselves.

Meanwhile, we deplore its great and growing evils. Already have thousands fallen victims to the sword, to exposure and disease; and the land has begun to be filled with voices of lamentation and sorrow. The

war is also wasting millions on millions of treasure, and threatening to load us ere long with a debt that may for ages hang like a vast incubus on the energies and interests of the nation. It is fast pouring over the land a flood of moral evils. It has deeply stirred the war-passions of our people, and is spreading far and wide a war-spirit which may one day prove fatal to our liberties. Washington himself warned us against war as our deadliest foe; Madison solemnly assured us, that ‘no nation can long preserve its freedom in the midst of continued warfare;’ a distinguished general from the South in the war of 1812 proclaimed his belief, that another one of the like kind would crumble the fabric of our government into ruins; and the recent conduct of Com. Sloat and Gen. Kearney, in adding to our republic territory enough for an empire, and creating therein a civil government, all by a mere word in the exercise of the war-power, proceeds on principles utterly inconsistent, in our view, with our free and glorious institutions. We know of no charter, or law, or legally expressed will of the people, that gave those commanders any right to exercise such supreme, unlimited powers. It seems to us an act of sheer despotism; and on the same principle might a Cæsar or Napoleon, at the head of a hundred thousand obsequious troops, change at will the present form of our government, and, by the aid of their bayonets, impose himself upon the country as PERPETUAL PRESIDENT.

On this point we cannot conceal our fears. Most republics hitherto have been whelmed in the vortex of war; our contemporaries south of us have, from their earliest rise, been almost incessantly destroying each other by the sword; and thus has popular government too generally become, sooner or later, a sort of foot-ball bandied over the earth in blood. God forbid that our own experiment should ever end thus; but, if we would prevent such a catastrophe, we must crush the evil in the bud by *repudiating the PRACTICAL DESPOTISM OF WAR.*

Still more do we deprecate the false and pernicious principles set afloat on the waves of this war. Besides all the vices and crimes inseparable from such a conflict, we have heard the cry of *our country, right or wrong!* the dogma that we must all unite in support of any war, however wicked, which our rulers may choose to declare; a principle that would nullify the edicts of heaven, and make the will of a single man, or a republican majority, the rule of our duty even against the express commands of God; a doctrine utterly unworthy of a Christian or a civilized people, and quite likely, if carried into general practice, to debase the moral character of our whole country, and prepare its future millions for a doom like that of Revolutionary France in the zenith of her blind and reckless atheism.

We speak our convictions without reserve; for we deem it our privilege and our duty. We look upon this war with undisguised abhorrence; we believe the general conscience of the nation to be decidedly, strongly against it; and we fear it will, if persisted in, call down upon us the just and fearful judgments of Heaven. We dare not, for any consideration, take upon ourselves the responsibility of this war; and we beseech your Honorable Bodies to arrest it, if you can; but, if this be not done, we wish, before God and man, to wash our hands from all share in what we deem its folly and its wickedness.

In behalf of the Am. Peace Society, and by order of its Executive Committee.

GEO. C. BECKWITH, *Cor. Secretary.*

WILLIAM C. BROWN, *Rec. Secretary.*

Office Am. Peace Society, Boston, Dec. 7, 1846.

EFFORTS FOR STOPPING THE MEXICAN WAR.—Besides forwarding the above petition, which was presented to the House of Representatives by Hon. CHARLES HUDSON, Dec. 15, and which we have taken measures for bringing before the people through a variety of newspapers, having sent it to some four hundred, we issued early in Dec. an appeal in favor of petitioning Congress for the termination of this war without any more effusion of blood. We are glad to find this appeal so extensively published, especially in religious papers, and its object so warmly seconded. We have sent about 2500 printed forms of petitions to half as many individuals, chiefly ministers of the gospel, in different parts of the country; and we trust that good men every where will soon make known to our government and the world their strong desires for immediate peace. Let them *all* do this, and the war would come to an end at once. We need not specify the other efforts we have been making for the same object; but, having addressed about 1000 newspapers on the subject, we would urge all our friends to enlist, as far as they possibly can, the newspapers near them in pleading earnestly for a speedy close of this war.

THE MEXICAN WAR:

WHAT SHALL BE DONE TO HASTEN ITS TERMINATION?

WE think it time to press this question upon the serious consideration of our countrymen. We would call their attention to it without distinction of party, and ask every one to inquire for himself what he ought to do or attempt for the speedy termination of our present war with Mexico.

This war *might* be terminated very soon. If a spirit of peace should pervade both parties; if either party, actuated by such a spirit, should stop fighting, and then offer to settle the points in dispute by fair reference to competent and impartial umpires; if war passions, and the semi-barbarous code of national honor did not goad them on in the work of mutual mischief and destruction; if the mass of the people in each or either country would call aloud for peace, or their rulers set themselves at work in earnest for a consummation so devoutly to be wished; how soon might this war come to a close, perhaps without even another drop of blood!

Such a result is confessedly possible. And does not its bare possibility impose on every good man the duty of doing all in his power to arrest the murderous, suicidal strife now going on between these republics? Does not every principle of our religion, every dictate of humanity, every motive of patriotism, every just view of all the interests at stake, require such services of us at the present crisis?

If asked *what* you shall do for the speedy termination of this war, we answer that a great deal may be done by every class and every individual in the community. A public sentiment, once set universally and strongly against its further prosecution, would bring it to an end very soon; and every person in the land can do something to help form such a sentiment, and give it utterance and efficacy. If this sentiment were expressed in the way of petitioning our rulers to take measures to stop the war, and such petitions were poured into Congress from men of every party at the East and the West, at the North and the South, would not their wishes be heeded, and the war be brought at once to a close? So it seems to us; and hence we would urge upon all the importance of their petitioning Congress to use its constitutional powers in arresting this war, and securing a just and honorable peace without any more bloodshed.

May we not appeal especially to Christians? They believe in a gospel of